

11-1976

Mission: Vol. 10, No. 5

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/missionjournal>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

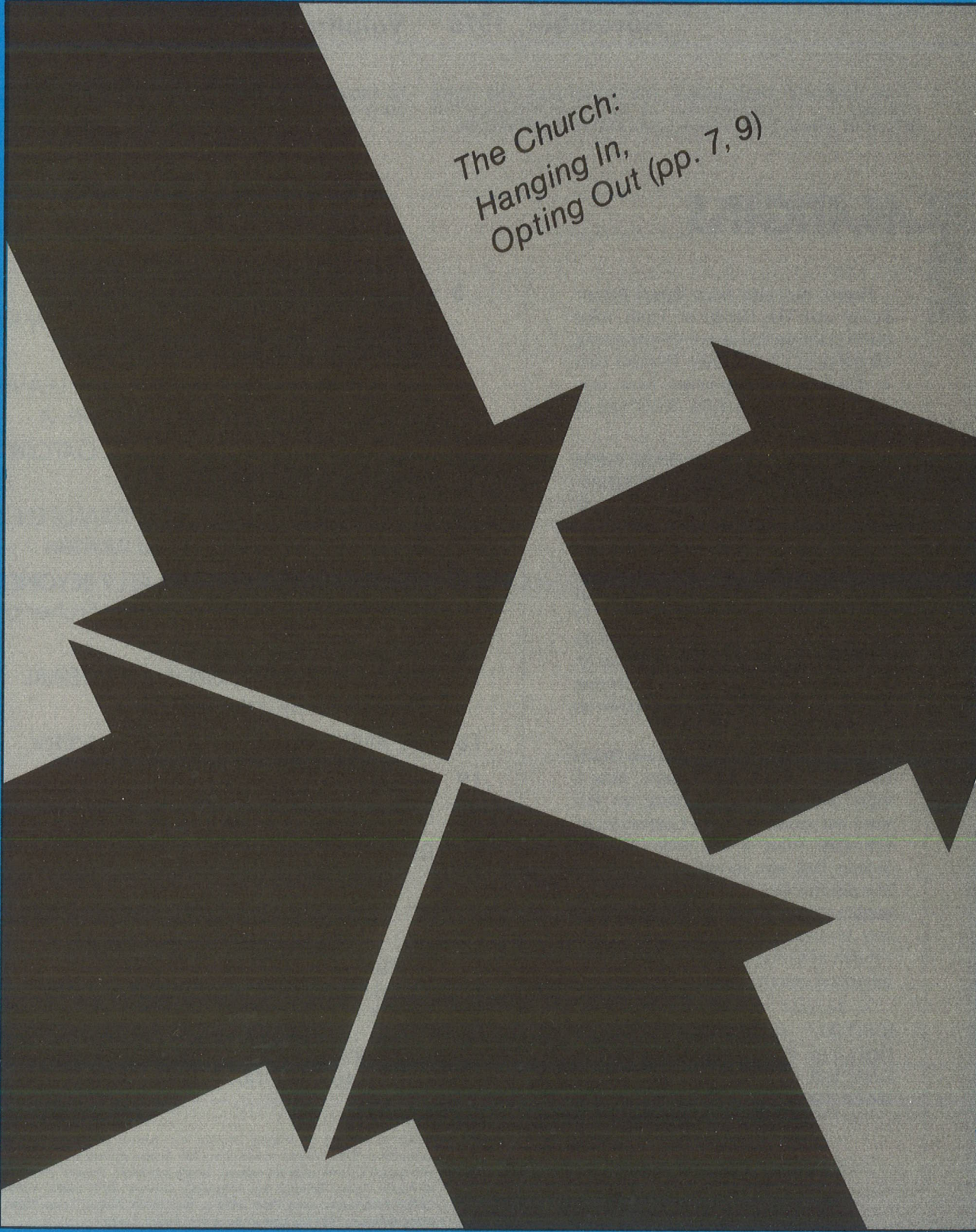
(1976) "Mission: Vol. 10, No. 5," *Mission*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 5 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/missionjournal/vol10/iss5/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Stone-Campbell Archival Journals at Digital Commons @ ACU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mission by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ ACU.

NOVEMBER

MISSION

1976



The Church:
Hanging In,
Opting Out (pp. 7, 9)

Grace Abandoned or Received? Pepperdine's Great Experiment (p. 3)

MISSION

November, 1976 Volume 10, Number 5

TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING ... TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION ...

TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."
EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

IN THE MARGINS

Recent mail-outs from Batsell Barrett Baxter and The Herald of Truth voice alarm at the decline in growth-rate among Churches of Christ. From Numero Uno in 1965, the census-takers have now scaled us down to twelfth in our rate of growth.

We heartily support any sound means of evangelism. But someone, we submit, should also ask whether the alarm is wisely directed if it excludes some hard questions about why so many of us drop out after becoming members. That frequently unpopular question is addressed in this issue by **Herbert Marlowe** (p. 7) and **Mary Lou Walden** (p. 9). It will do little long-term good to whip ourselves up to evangelistic frenzy while practicing church in ways that wilt the spirits so evangelized.

The report on page 18 ("Life and Death Issues") is of personal concern, since I serve on a committee helping get the word out about the Texas Conference of Churches' Value of Life project. Project director Rex Mix, as well as TCC executive director Roy Cates, are (holy) kissin' cousins (Disciples). They go out of their way to involve willing members of the Church of Christ (which also used to be interested in unity movements.)

A former feature, "**Opinion/R.S.V.P.**," starts again on page 23. Don't resist the urge to sound off on this issue, and to suggest other topics we should examine together.

CONTENTS

- 3 GRACE ABANDONED OR RECEIVED?
PEPPERDINE'S GREAT EXPERIMENT By Kenny Waters
- 7 TWO WORLDS APART; WHY SOME LEAVE THE CHURCH By Herbert A. Marlowe, Jr.
- 8 MAGDALEN COLLEGE CHAPEL, OXFORD A Poem by Jackson Hill
- 9 ON STAYING OR LEAVING: PITFALLS EN ROUTE TO PARADISE By Mary Lou Walden
- 13 LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL? BEYOND RHETORIC AND GUILT By Eva Archer and Twila Ross
- 15 VALUES AND DANGERS IN MINISTERIAL TRAINING By John McRay
- 18 LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES By the Editor
- 19 BOOKS
- 21 FORUM
- 23 CROSS CURRENTS
- 23 RSVP
- 24 LOOKING OUT

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	RON DURHAM
MANAGING EDITOR	RAY CHESTER
LITERARY EDITOR	JAMES W. CULP
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR	BOBBIE LEE HOLLEY
ART DIRECTOR	MARK SMITH
CIRCULATION SECRETARY	MARY ELISABETH WEED
EDITORIAL SECRETARY	FAYE DURHAM

Published monthly by Mission Journal, Inc. Annual subscription \$6. Three-year subscription \$15. Five-year subscription \$20. Annual student subscription \$4. Bundle and bound volume rates on request. Single copies \$1. Second class postage paid at Austin, Texas. Editorial and circulation address: BOX 15024, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78761. Postmaster: send Form 3579 to Box 15024, Austin, Texas 78761. Editorial office location: 7701 No. Lamar, Suite 414, Austin, Texas.

Grace Abandoned or Received? Pepperdine's Great Experiment

By Kenny Waters

Pepperdine University is an incredibly complex institution. It has four campuses, numerous off-campus centers, and a diverse student body spanning the globe. The school has grown rapidly in recent years, and is now attempting to solidify and shape this growth into a more effectively administered institution.

During the seven-year period of rapid growth, there has been a continuous dialogue about the future of the school's spiritual ties. The restructuring of the board of regents to allow for 40 percent non-Church of Christ members is a part of a series of moves which can be called "The Great Experiment." Although an insider for eight years as a student and employee, I do not profess to know all the internal complexities involved in this experiment. For that reason, this article is as much a personal opinion piece as a journalistic endeavor.

What has prompted all the dialogue during these years? While little would be served by exhuming all the charges that have been made, a recap of the most crucial issues is necessary to put the conversation into focus. They include:

- *Financial practices* so widely questioned that the issue was recently raised again by the *Sacramento Bee*, even though school officials say they were settled months ago to the satisfaction of the state's Attorney General. For example, a confidential fund was maintained to channel year-end, lump-sum salary payments to top administrators. The practice was stopped even though it was ruled legal by a California grand jury.

- *The role of M. Norvel Young*, who has been warmly received by churches and other groups he has addressed

on the dangers of alcohol, but who has not yet been reinstated as chancellor of the university. In addition to his accident last year, a "confidential" statement to the judge, leaked to the press, drew fire from some in the church. Young explained in the statement that pressures "to prove my fundamentalistic soundness" contributed to his drinking problem.

- *Strong ties to conservative politics*, which some fear will dilute an independently Christian stance.

- *Low teacher salaries* with, frequently, correspondingly low morale. The shortage of available cash has forced the school to lay off nearly forty employees and to close several programs.

From his own perspective, Young's situation was stabilized when he recently returned to fulltime work with the college, after a leave during which he fulfilled a court sentence by writing and speaking on executive stress and the dangers of drinking. An impressive flow of 2,000 letters expressing Christian love helped him overcome much of his personal grief after the 1975 accident, which was fatal to two women. Judging from the response extended to him by churches and church-related colleges, most church members consider the matter closed and are willing to forgive and forget.

As for monetary problems, the administration says that the financial picture is bright now because of several sizable donations. Notable among the donors is Mrs. Frank Roger Seaver, whose name the college at Malibu wears. Mrs. Seaver is a lifelong Congregationalist attracted to the school because of its religious and political conservatism.

Young's controversial future and school finances aside, four aspects of the university attract my own interest: administration, faculty, students, and the Chancellor's Council. Perhaps my observations in these areas can help establish a basis for evaluating The Great Experiment, and for

Kenny Waters, former associate director of public relations on Pepperdine's Malibu campus, is currently completing a Ph.D. degree in communication at the University of Southern California.

determining how Christians can constructively help or criticize. No claim is made for comprehensiveness—this article must slight the considerable accomplishments of the schools of business, education and law. These are teaching thousands of professionals in an ethically and academically sound environment, fulfilling one of founder George Pepperdine's greatest dreams. But the spiritual nerve center is at Malibu, particularly Seaver College, where long-range policy is made; and it is here that this analysis concentrates.

ADMINISTRATION AND REGENTS

One of the biggest areas of church concern, an indicator some see as finalizing Pepperdine's break with the church, is the creation of the board of regents and the inclusion of non-Church of Christ members in this, the school's highest ruling body.

Both Young and President William S. Banowsky agreed to the board's expansion. Its 60 percent majority, when voting as a bloc, assures continuation of Church of Christ concerns at Pepperdine. Staunch members such as Reuel Lemmons and Ira North demonstrate a determination that the school maintain its philosophical ties with the church. The non-Church of Christ members contribute much of the university treasury and are astute business people—a much-needed asset. They have been attracted to Pepperdine by the spiritual fruits of its leaders and students—a compliment to the identity which Pepperdine has cultivated in Southern California.

The formation of the new board is an experiment unique to Church of Christ related colleges. It represents an attempt to incorporate the best of two worlds, allowing members of the Church of Christ to control policy, while receiving financial help from sympathetic business people. It is an idea that may attract the fancy of "liberal" church people—and the prayers of the more traditional.

Young and Banowsky told me of their deep desire to maintain a vital relationship with Churches of Christ. In other contexts, Banowsky has been less enthusiastic as he reflects on the support, or lack of it, church members have offered. Pepperdine's situation in relationship to the Church of Christ is somewhat different from other church-related schools. It is attempting to maintain a Christian stance in what is a mission field for Churches of Christ. And there is no precedent for establishing a multi-campus university on a mission field.

Relationships with the churches have been hampered by Young's and Banowsky's lack of good public relations preventive maintenance. Both have been too busy to create an ongoing public relations program which would reach out to the church and ask for input before crucial decisions

are made. With Church of Christ board members and the Chancellor's Council apparently intensifying their involvement, this problem could be alleviated.

"We aren't a perfect institution," Young admits. "We do have a unique mission opportunity on the West Coast, though, and we need constructive criticism from the church. If it were to cut us off now, we'd lose our Christian foundation and be unable to avoid secularism."

It is Young's hope that the church will not labor under the false illusion that Pepperdine is like Abilene Christian University or David Lipscomb, which have established their relationship with the churches in areas where they are numerically stronger. Students, says Young, should come to Pepperdine understanding that they will encounter a mission field where their faith will be challenged, yet strengthened.

Both Young and Banowsky say that if Pepperdine had wanted to cut its ties with the Church of Christ, it would have done so years ago, not exposing itself to the continuing questions regarding its intentions. "Our continued efforts to relate to Churches of Christ during low periods of support should be seen as indicating our desire to stick with the church," Young said.

It is at the point of church relations that President Banowsky remains an enigma to many. Occasionally rumored to be seeking public office, and sometimes perceived as an anti-church force within the university, Banowsky projects a complex and puzzling image. According to several sources he plans to remain at Pepperdine and see it through what they see as an emerging period of stabilization. He has publicly stated that desire several times since first telling students last year that he was resigning as Republican National Committeeman from California and discontinuing political involvement. He and Young have disagreed on exactly how to implement The Great Experiment, but it is doubtful that Banowsky would ever totally disavow his Restoration roots and lead a break with the Church of Christ.

"I would like to see us be the Southern California Stanford, with a unifying center," Banowsky told the *Los Angeles Times* recently, "and I would like for that unifying center to be an attraction to the values represented in the person of Christ."

Any other stance would no doubt be resisted by Pepperdine administrators such as Howard White, Charles Runnels, Larry Hornbaker, Warren Dilliard, Frank Pack, Bob Thomas, John Nicks, and Don Sime, who represent a strong, church-oriented commitment. They disagree with

some of the particulars of The Great Experiment; that they remain at the school should be an indication of their hope for what can yet happen.

Carl Mitchell, former missionary and now chairman of the Religion division, has sounded a word of caution about the Pepperdine plan, while validating the intent of its engineers. In a prepared statement, he said:

In the day-to-day battle for survival, an existential spirit can come to pervade us to the extent that we could be tempted to depart from the universal truths of God's holy word. To my knowledge, it is neither the intent of the board of regents, the administration, nor the preponderance of the faculty that this occur.

THE FACULTY

There is a diversity of theological opinion among the Malibu faculty. Most, however, are members of the Church of Christ, and it is this group which has become the most vocal on the Malibu campus in the past few years.

Some "mainstream" Church of Christ educators like James Smythe, Mitchell, Glen Boyd, Morris Womack, Douglas Dean, Warren Kilday, Pack, Bill Stivers, and Stewart Hudson are concerned that a potentially destructive ecumenical spirit could arise. They are, however, people of profound loyalty to Pepperdine's ideals of having a church outreach on the west coast. They prefer to make their feelings known internally, not externally.

"Kenny, you know how I feel," one said when asked for an interview. "But I don't want to hurt my ability to work within by having my opinions printed in *Mission*."

The public proclamations of this group are best expressed in Mitchell's statement. He noted the mission spirit on campus and added: "It is my hope that brothers and sisters in Christ everywhere can understand the uniqueness of this center of learning and labor with us shoulder to shoulder, in prayer, in understanding, and in active concern."

If people such as these were to leave Pepperdine, it is a safe conclusion that the university's ties with traditional Restorationism are over. Other teachers are expressing concern about the Christian commitment of top administrators, but are not so concerned with keeping traditional Church of Christ ties.

One matter teachers do agree on is that they are poorly paid, have large teaching loads, and too little voice in policy making. Banowsky says that the salary and work load issues also trouble him. He sees them as indicators of academic excellence and feels if teachers can receive better salaries, he can attract even more well-trained young teachers. A reduction in the teaching load would allow pro-

fessors more time for research, often increasing academic reputation. Some of the research projects would be in areas of Restoration literature, history, and theology.

The policy-making demands were given impetus recently by revelations that administrative salaries were on par with those paid many large public university leaders. Teachers, meanwhile, rank very low on the national salary scale. Given these salary inequities, some instructors are now asking for more access to financial records, some of them doubting the sincerity of the administration.

Anger over these three issues led to a one-day classroom boycott by Malibu teachers last February. While they received a 3 percent raise soon after the action, there is still dissatisfaction, most of it aimed at the credibility gap between administrators and themselves.

Two faculty members and an administrator—John Nicks, Norman Hughes, and Bob Thomas—were recently named to high administrative posts. All are highly respected, and many believe that their new positions will help administrator-teacher dialogue.

THE STUDENTS

Pepperdine's most important product is its student body; their accomplishments and needs have sometimes been slighted in the clamor over other matters.

The students at Seaver College are a highly evangelistic group. While only 15.5 percent are members of the Church of Christ, I would estimate that nearly two-thirds hold Christian convictions and a sizable number express this conviction by evangelizing. Although outsiders to administrative decisions, they are insiders in the sense that they are engrossed in the task of doing Christianity, not just talking it. As long as they are actively involved in evangelism, Pepperdine will have a Christian influence.

Several programs, such as the two-year missionary apprenticeship SHARE and a campus chaplain's office supervised by Rick Rowland, have been established by the Malibu Church of Christ to help with the evangelistic effort.

Mitchell sees the evangelistic opportunity as the strongest point of the university. In a recent paper, he noted:

Because Pepperdine has a preponderance of students not identified with the Restoration plea, tremendous evangelistic opportunities have been afforded. As a consequence, many hundreds have been won to Christ and redirected into channels of service to him. During two

recent years in which I kept records, about 100 were baptized each year. In one class that I taught in the book of Acts, fourteen persons were baptized. Of the six who entered the mission field from Pepperdine last year, three were baptized while students here.

Christian students aren't silent over administrative decisions in spite of their immersion in campus evangelism.

"Christian students try to make their feelings known, but get frustrated," one recent graduate said. "They are finally realizing that their questions are sometimes not answered because administrators aren't sure how to answer. Unfortunately, the silence is interpreted as insincerity."

My personal observation has been that students want to believe the school's official statements, but have a hard time reconciling Banowsky's chapel speeches with outside press reports.

One issue that has caused student concern was the naming of the Malibu campus "Seaver College." Mrs. Seaver, in keeping with her husband's pledge to help Pepperdine build the campus, has given the school somewhere between \$12 and \$50 million in cash and stock. Reflecting on the college naming, the campus newspaper recently editorialized:

Perhaps the greatest insult to the memory of Mr. Pepperdine can be found in Payson Library, where portraits of Mr. Pepperdine and Mr. Seaver hang side by side. On these portraits are plaques naming both men as founders of the university. We recoil at this affront to Mr. Pepperdine.

Of crucial importance to the tone of the university is the availability of financial aid for Christian students. Many of them cannot afford the steep tuition, and this has forced them to scrape for aid. A common complaint at Pepperdine is that these students' financial needs are slighted in favor of the school's athletes, many of whom are on scholarship but make no claims to Christian commitment. However, the hiring last year of aquatics coach Rowland, a founder of the national Campus Advance for Christ movement, is perceived as a thrust toward evangelizing Pep athletes as they carry the school's name into national intercollegiate sports.

THE CHANCELLOR'S COUNCIL

The Chancellor's Council was established several years ago to encourage Church of Christ input. It also serves as a somewhat controlled outlet for rumors. Most of the 150 advisors are preachers and elders in California. They fill a vital function in the church's relationship to the school, although some feel they are not adequately utilized as advisors.

The council's major task has been to conduct extensive research on and interviews with the university community, and to formulate a policy statement on Pepperdine's Christian philosophy. Its major compilers are

communications consultant Robert Scott; La Mesa, Calif., minister Dave Malone; and Torrance, Calif., minister Bob Marshall.

According to Dave Ogilbee, former secretary of the council, few of the members have an insider's view of the school and are therefore still asking basic questions. They are mainly concerned about the long-range spiritual position of the university, he noted.

"Chancellor's Council members don't question the spiritual commitment of administrators," he said. "They are concerned, though, that administrators are separating their work as educators from their work as Christians, and in the process moving the school away from the Church of Christ."

Ogilbee also said the council is concerned about a "duplicity of rhetoric," in that commitments of loyalty to the church are made to the council, while private statements—like the transcript from Young's probation hearing—stand in contrast to the public proclamations. "Sometimes it sounds as if the administration is taking a condescending attitude toward the council's work," Ogilbee said.

The Chancellor's Council members are tenaciously sticking to their desire to have input into the spiritual life of Pepperdine, however. "We believe God is able to effect changes at Pepperdine so it can truly be a Christian university," Bob Scott said of the council's continuing efforts.

WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS DO?

Young has called for Christian involvement in the future of Pepperdine. He suggests that special concerns be expressed by writing members of the Chancellor's Council, or the Associated Women of Pepperdine. Ogilbee stresses the importance of writing top administrators, and teachers whose Christian commitment is explicit.

Churches can use the Christian resources that are available. Mitchell wants to make more courses in missions available to the churches. Religion teachers and students are available for preaching and campaigns. Christian scholars will gladly share findings from their intense studies in Restoration-related areas.

Donations can be made to scholarship funds for students who want to serve as preachers or missionaries, or in other church-related work.

And, of course, concerned Christians can pray, and never cease to care. In the final analysis, there is the danger that mere complaints about how far Pepperdine has strayed from commitment to the church may become self-fulfilling prophecies. If that happens, the church could lose one of its most challenging opportunities for outreach, secularism would win by default, and the kingdom would suffer because of condemnation without positive action.

□

Two Worlds Apart: Why Some Leave the Church

By Herbert A. Marlowe, Jr.

Several years ago the popular television series *Star Trek* presented an episode which dealt with the problem of a cleavage in the universe. The plot was built around preventing the meeting of two humanoids, one from a matter universe, the other from an anti-matter universe, through this fracture. If they were to meet in either distinct universe, both universes would be destroyed. Through the wisdom, skill, and good fortune of the *Star Trek* crew, plus the self-sacrificing behavior of one humanoid, the encounter took place in a no-man's-land between the universes. Here the two humanoids became locked in perpetual struggle, and the two inimical universes were saved.

What has this dramatic situation to do with leaving the Church of Christ? I think that it is directly analogous to our current predicament. Many members are locked in a similar struggle, a war to prevent the disastrous meeting of two opposing universes. The identification of these two universes, the reasons for the war, the results of this conflict are the concerns of this article. One universe, which we will call the *scientific* universe, is a world view which is rational and explorative in nature. The second universe, which we will name the *restorationist* universe, is a universe oriented toward the past.

Both universes are developed and transmitted through the values, ethos, and worldview taught by the church. For reasons to be explored later, many members experience a need to bring these two universes together. The consequence of this effort to establish harmony between the universes, to find a correlation between them, is often departure from the Church of Christ, the initial creator.

We have labeled the first universe the "scientific" universe. Here it is important to be open-minded, a questioner, an explorer. Truth is continually being revealed,

and change is the nature of reality. Independent thought and action are highly valued. The church conveys acceptance of this universe by its practice. It rewards the same behaviors that the westernized, scientific world rewards. It reinforces its members for going to college, getting good jobs, becoming successful. Observe the persons who become elders, those who are acknowledged as church leaders. Note which young people are pointed to with pride. The Church of Christ encourages its members to acquire the education and to develop the skills needed to pursue the American Dream. (We might note that the members have pursued it well. If any church has crossed the tracks since World War II, it is the Church of Christ.) It is by rewarding the development of these skills—skills which require people to think, decide, and act for themselves—that the Church of Christ has imparted the values of the scientific world.

We have termed "restorationist" the second universe created by the Church of Christ. Acceptance of it is accomplished by the theology of the church. The very heart of any restorationist theology is an allegiance to an abstraction of the past. It is a universe turned in upon itself, focused on its own existence. There exist absolute authorities and absolute truth, revealed and interpreted once and for all. It is a theology which conceives a perfect pattern. It requires minds which must be subservient to that pattern. Any deviation receives automatic disapproval.

So in that highly complex and subtle process known as human development, two universes develop for many church members. The church sends two inherently contradictory messages: one, *use your intelligence and strive for one ideal*; two, *do not trust your intellect, and conform to a different ideal*. This is a classic example of what psychologists call "double bind."

As in the *Star Trek* tale, as long as these universes are

Herbert A. Marlowe, Jr. is an instructor and Ph.D. candidate at the Florida Mental Health Institute, Tampa.

separate, all is well. Unfortunately, there are forces in each universe which compel their meeting. In the scientific universe there is a drive for consistency, a drive to be congruent in one's thought. In the restoration universe there is a strong value on striving for Christian perfection, and those members who take that value most seriously eventually discover in Christ the desire for wholeness, for integration. And so the worlds press upon each other.

Members of the Church of Christ who feel that pressure toward consistency and wholeness respond in different ways. Some members attempt to suppress the inherent contradiction of both universes in order to keep the universes apart. In other members one universe is more fully developed; therefore, it becomes a matter of envelopment since integration is impossible. Some people discount the scientific universe. Others disavow the restorationist universe. These latter leave the church, if not physically at least in mind and spirit.

The church has an obligation to respond to these people, because it is the church which, by its theology and its practice, has created this double bind situation. It has set some of its members on a path for departure. How, therefore, shall the church respond?

Before the church can discern the proper response, it must comprehend the scope and the complexity of the problem. The church needs to discover that there are men and women who have left the Church of Christ in heart, and soul, and mind while their bodies have remained in our pews. Since we do not have access to the workings of a person's mind, we may not be aware that his inner convictions have gradually changed. It may appear that someone suddenly leaves the church. In reality, that person may have left long ago. Members may leave the Church of Christ physically, but they can also leave psychologically and intellectually. This fact must be acknowledged.

The attempt to suppress the contradictions between the two inimical universes causes one to be caught in a perpetual inner struggle. An example which well illustrates this point is a well-known leader in the Church of Christ. This man, an administrator of one of our Christian colleges, was recently involved in a most unfortunate situation. In trying to explain his actions, he confessed that he had been unable to resolve the difficulties involved in striving for the ideal of academic excellence (a value of the scientific universe) while at the same time attempting to please the church. No one, least of all the man himself, denies his own personal guilt. But the church has yet to admit its corporate responsibility for creating a structure and an environment which placed such conflicting pressures upon this man. The values, the ethos, the teachings, and the rewards of the Church of Christ all pressed this man into a double-bind situation. He found it impossible to be truly a man of integrity, consistent in belief and in action.

The Christ of this earth was the man of perfect integrity: he was consistent in thought, in word, in deed. Any church which claims his discipleship must not drive its members toward positions in which they cannot find that

consistency. Such a church is not true to Christ. Such a church must reexamine and revise some of its basic assumptions.

Once the Church of Christ can reexamine itself, it will then be able to see the proper response to those who leave it. Ideally the response of the church to those former members it has spawned should be love, repentance, and faith—love, simply because all persons are worthy of love; repentance, because the church itself drives away its faithful; and faith, because it drives them not from God, but to God.

□

Magdalen College Chapel, Oxford

*Distant things of beauty—
reredos, Epiphany, Tallis—
all vaporous in the mind,
and touched by spirit paraclete,
anchoring firm the Man-God Jesus
more than words*

*Demystified truths—
command, example, inference—
all encapsulated and secure
beads on a rosary of deductive method,
protecting saints from rapture and a mystery
more real than earth*

*Canticles of the spirit—
rich and rolling music of the mind—
forbidden fruits, these
gothic swirls that breathe God
in an ageless mist of truth and history
more real than time.*

Jackson Hill

On Staying or Leaving: Pitfalls en Route to Paradise

By Mary Lou Walden

As we were saying a year ago, all works and no grace may indeed make Jill a Dull Pill ("Church of Christ Culture and Women: Up from Traditions of Men," November, December 1975). But that's just one alternative. It may instead make her a case study in a medical journal, a skeleton in a crowded family closet, or a potential bridge jumper who longingly eyes the river bottom.

The women previously interviewed mirrored what I am convinced is a growing number of women who are willing to speak openly of their religious heritage. Their openness perhaps angered some who feel less free to talk. But that group of women, however representative, did not speak for all Church of Christ women. They did not, for example, speak for the numerous women of our heritage who have suffered psychological-emotional stress. To put it baldly, they did not speak for those among us who have had breakdowns brought on, directly or indirectly, by Church of Christ doctrine and culture. In behalf of these women we previously ignored, a sensitive young woman raised the question bluntly before a public gathering of Christians: "How do you explain to me that my nervous breakdown was the result of a big mistake?"

In hopes of grappling with that question, we want here to show which aspects of our culture (*i.e.*, theology in practice) have been psychologically damaging by observing how two particular women have dealt with the problem—"Jennifer," as we will call her, by leaving the Church of Christ, and "Dorothy" by remaining in the fold. In years past, both of these persons have had mental breakdowns which were the "result of a big mistake" in their religious upbringing. Now fully cured, thanks to professional help and the grace of God, and leading useful and productive lives, they are able to talk about their experiences in the culture that shaped their formative years.

Mary Lou Walden is a former English teacher and is currently teaching an adult writing course where she lives in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

They speak without malice or bitterness and with only one motive: to be helpful to others undergoing similar struggles, as well as to those in positions of authority to make biblical changes that will help prevent recurrences of their difficulties. As one of these women expressed her concern, "I trust that the tone of all I've said is constructive. I will feel right about discussing these matters publicly only if you think it will help the Church of Christ, not hurt it. I have prayed for guidance in what I said."

As I talked with Jennifer and Dorothy, I asked them a series of questions to help structure our discussion:

MLW: What was your background in the Church of Christ as a child and what do you recall most vividly about this upbringing?

Jennifer: My earliest memories were basically positive. My church (a large and prominent Middle Tennessee church) was blessed with wise leadership both in the pulpit and in the teaching program. What impressed me about the women who were my teachers was not so much their teaching as their lifestyle; they were very gracious women.

Dorothy: My mother's side of the family brought with them a Tennessee Church of Christ culture when they moved to Oklahoma in the early 1900s. When I think freely of early memories, I remember kindness and gentleness and a love that was particularly comforting to me after my parents divorced when I was in the third grade. I remember, too, being embarrassed, along about fifth grade when regular church attendance was not possible, at not knowing *facts* of the Bible like other kids did. But overall, I am grateful for those memories of a caring concern.

MLW: Then, in view of these positive experiences, when did you first begin to feel tension and conflicts stemming from church involvement?

Jennifer: Well, I believe that there were four things that made me consciously ashamed of my church: exclusivism, anti-intellectualism, absence of joy in worship services as

well as in individuals' lives, and religious competition—a sort of silent, “holier-than-thou” attitude. I can remember never wanting to take friends to church with me because somehow bringing them to Jesus seemed less important than bringing them to the Church of Christ. Religious exclusivism and absence of joy in worship services were burdens to me at an early age, long before I became a teenager. Later in adolescence, anti-intellectualism and competitiveness burdened me. Now, as an adult, I can understand that the competitive drive is a human failing shared by all, but as an idealistic youth our efforts to be the “most” and “biggest” struck me as flagrant hypocrisy.

My solution to our anti-intellectual approach was to feel guilty that my questions and problems were “different,” thus making me an outcast. I now believe that a better educated minister might have easily resolved this conflict by teaching me the doctrine of creation: that because God created my mind, it was “very good,” and that God loved *all* of me, mind included, which he expected me to use.

Dorothy: My case was a little different because of my parents' divorce. You see, I was from the beginning plagued by a feeling, sometimes vague, sometimes strong, of not belonging. I am hesitant to blame this feeling entirely on the church, as being from a broken home can itself be the primary cause for this misery. But even so, the church culture aggravated my feelings of not being OK. The church had a way in which it spoke of people whose lives were marred by the sin of divorce. My father remarried almost immediately, so I became the child of an adulterer and heard on countless occasions the message that “these children (me) are bad marriage risks.” I must have heard that thousands of times in a variety of ways, some subtle, some blatant.

I kept wondering what was wrong with *me*. There was at the same time a loud, unspoken approval of white, middle-class, intact families who always did “right” things. It was not until I was married to a man who was “properly” brought up in the traditional Church of Christ culture and could build my home and family in the “proper” way that I could feel a sense of belonging even in the Church of Christ. And this was true primarily because now by the “proper performance” I could fulfill requirements for acceptance.

Then another boogie raised its ugly head—the exclusivism Jennifer mentioned: we are God's chosen, we *alone* follow his word purely, and we alone will make it to heaven if we live flawless lives. This attitude separates us from humanity, from weak and unfaithful Christians as well as Christians in other churches, from other religions, and ultimately from the world. Isolated from others whose love I needed and feeling generally *not OK*, both situations triggered by my church world and its “mistakes,” I could no longer bear the strain and my weary body collapsed in nervous, guilt-laden exhaustion at a time when I should have been a creative, functioning adult.

Jennifer: I want to elaborate further on Dorothy's point about our having to live the “super-perfect” life to be

ultimately saved. That's part of the Church of Christ dogma of a “contractual conception of salvation,” a teaching that troubled me seriously. It's the “plan of salvation” that says I must go through a certain number of steps, five as I recall, and then God is obligated to save me temporarily and conditionally, the condition depending on my success in “right living” until I die.

This false doctrine was seriously crippling to my spiritual development because I felt that my salvation was all up to me. It omitted both the living presence of God (remember Jesus promised, “I am with you always” and “I will not leave you comfortless”) and his grace, by implying that God's activity was limited to my correct interpretation of his written word. Without realizing it, many Church of Christ people worship the Bible first, God second, as if it were the Book that created the Deity!

MLW: Yes, that misconception is difficult for us to recognize until we've faced a crisis. I recall being in a discussion group in which our women had great difficulty understanding that each person needs to establish her own faith in Jesus and God, and that we don't do this by merely reading the Bible or by copying activities of the apostles. We do it, in part at least, by trying to be true to the gifts and talents God has endowed us with individually. But perhaps that's a subject for us to discuss later. The point is that unless our trust is ultimately in the Living Word (Jesus) rather than in the written word, important though the Bible is, our spiritual stability is on shaky ground.

To move on, however, would one of you be willing to describe what happened to you as you tried to live as a “faithful Christian woman?”

Dorothy: Yes, I'll try to. All through high school I wanted very much to go to a Christian college, which I finally did. I value these years and the friendships they provided. It was there I met and married my husband. After he graduated, we moved to Texas, set up housekeeping and awaited the arrival of our first baby. This was actually the beginning of the goodness of the next few years as well as the start of what later became a living hell. We worked very hard doing church work and raising a family.

After five years, we moved to what is considered to be a Church of Christ “mission field” where our hard work continued. In the course of time, I discovered that working hard in the kingdom by doing what others expected me to do, all the while denying my own needs yet maintaining that “all-is-well” look of happiness, soon began to take its toll. My faith in God never wavered, but I thought that something was terribly wrong with me when I had no more energy and was overcome with depression. In all my years of listening to preachers and teachers as well as reading church literature, I can't remember any messages about God's grace or the capacity of his love to reach out through my weakness and support me till I could see my way out of darkness. Instead, I had always been taught that Christians are happy, not depressed people, and that we do not question God's will for us. The answers, after all, are cut and dried in a black Book. All you have to do is

read it or let the preacher tell you what it says. And God forbid that a Christian should have a nervous breakdown and make us all look bad!

When I got to the end of this tightrope, pain, darkness, and desperation were mine twenty-four hours a day, and I prayed that God would please let me die. I had to go alone for awhile on a long expedition inside myself; then with help from a doctor and after much agony and hard mental work, I began to feel truly human for the first time in all my life. By "feeling human" I mean that I was free to read, to question, to feel the gamut of human emotions without guilt; I could at long last accept myself and in so doing accept others.

Now without wanting to sound critical, I must add that at the moment when I needed my Christian brothers and sisters the most, they were the least able to help. At church services there were times when old friends would not look at me and speak because they felt that I had betrayed them in my depression. There were many times when my family went off to church services, leaving me at home alone in my sickness when I should not have been left alone, because "going to church" is the most important thing a Church of Christ Christian does! Well, my friends and I learned a lot over those years, but I believe that I learned more from my "worldly" contacts and perhaps received more genuine, sustaining love from them. Please understand that I say this to encourage us to become more sensitive to one another's needs, not to hurt anyone.

MLW: In listening to both of you talk about these problems, I'm wondering if you think you would have had similar problems had you been born male.

Jennifer: Not quite as many, I'm sure. In Middle Tennessee in the 40s and 50s I did grow up with a distorted view of women. My family and southern culture helped condition this view, but the church also played a part. It taught that my place is in the home, in the church (*i.e.*, the building), and at church socials if properly dressed. Yet behind the scenes, I discovered that women "ran the church" in quiet but very aggressive ways; and I believe this was the case because they were reacting to being ignored in ways that are basic to self esteem. When I was coming of age, the Church of Christ needed a broader understanding of Christian service and vocation and women's place in those areas. We had too few adult models who were both well rounded and capable and at the same time devoutly Christian. But I think boys also had problems finding male models who were admirable.

Dorothy: Yes, certainly boys suffered as well—perhaps because genuinely admirable people are a minority in any generation—but I think that girls had to endure deeper neglect than boys in the important area of self esteem. I think all three of us would agree that the church nurtures self worth in males more than in females. Even as young adolescent boys, males are encouraged to take part not only in the church's public worship but also in decision making by being encouraged to attend business meetings.

For girls there was (is) no intellectual equivalent to this exposure; instead, we were ignored except when our help was needed in serving capacities. And you don't need a very lively imagination to understand the thirty or forty years of always being subservient can take a huge toll on any sensitive woman.

MLW: Produce a Dull Jill, you mean?

Dorothy: Exactly. I was one myself before my breakdown. To serve is beautiful, as Jesus' personal life illustrates, but only if service is freely chosen and not imposed by subtle or heavy-handed coercion.

MLW: Let's turn now to discuss the practical ways you handled your difficulties with the Church of Christ. Jennifer, you left the church many years ago and have spent the past twenty years active in two other denominations, all the while keeping in close touch with the church through parents and friends. And, Dorothy, you chose to stay. Now one simple explanation for what you did is marriage. Jennifer, you married a strong Christian of another religious body, whereas Dorothy's husband had been active in the Church of Christ all his life. But other than these ties that motivated you to act as you did, there must have been many other considerations.

Jennifer: Of course, there were. Like Dorothy, while still in college I met and married my husband who was a theology student as well as a minister in the "wrong" church. He and his parents were among the most dedicated Christians I had ever met, and their faith was overwhelming and contagious. But I did not change churches just for their sakes or to achieve family unity. I left the Church of Christ because John taught me to understand the Bible in new and different ways.

In saying this, I am not saying that he duped me into compromising my faith, though I know I'll be accused of that. On the contrary, he taught me the "doctrine of creation" right out of the Bible that I mentioned earlier; it affirmed both my sexuality and my intellectual curiosity. Then knowing and feeling that it was all right to question certain points of Church of Christ doctrine, I learned through John's guidance that there is no biblical basis for religious exclusivism nor for an emphasis on rationalistic propositions like the "contractual plan of salvation" I referred to before. Rather, I saw for the first time the Bible's focus on God's grace (book of Romans, for instance) and on joy—and what an enormous relief!

MLW: Then are you saying that your decision to leave the Church of Christ was mainly theological, not emotional?

Jennifer: Basically, yes, it was. But, you see, we don't make decisions in a vacuum. It was the *whole* Jennifer who chose to leave, not just her mind. Church of Christ people have trouble with that because of their bias for rationalism.

Dorothy: I'll confess frankly that it hasn't been easy for me to stay. I've thought many times of leaving, and in some important invisible ways, I certainly have "left," though my body remains. As I have learned to think for myself, I have come to see that a thinking person can be smothered by the limited intellectual situation. It's a paradox, I guess. Our theology is so rationalistic, so brain-oriented, yet the extent to which we are free to use our brains is so rigidly scant. I never cease to be amazed at the large numbers of well-educated men, professionally speaking, who seem perfectly content not to use their brains at all on matters of Bible interpretation. Many men like this hold positions of authority and leadership in the church, yet if they worked at their jobs as carelessly as they work to understand Scripture, they'd soon be replaced by others more competent.

MLW: As though faith can solve all conflict. . . Do you ever feel guilty for not having left—ever feel as if you're living a lie?

Dorothy: Not exactly, though it has often been painful to stay and maintain the facade essential to keep the peace. But I can still feel right about what I am doing because I have done so to provide a workable pattern of unity within my family. We are a close family, and it's important to me to maintain that bond. Also, I think that a community of people with common goals, regardless of the ultimate "rightness" of those goals—unless, of course, they're clearly evil—is vital to the healthy development of young people. Church of Christ culture has provided that for our four children to the extent that they feel loved and secure. I'm grateful for that contribution the church has made to our family.

MLW: Jennifer, have you ever regretted leaving?

Jennifer: No, I haven't. I did what I had to do, and I am not sorry because the joy and fullness which God's grace has bestowed on me, especially in recent years as my relationship with Jesus has deepened, would never have been possible had I stayed in the church culture I grew up in. But at the same time, I empathize with Dorothy's decision to stay in the fold. Because my parents and some of my dearest friends have also "stayed," I have been able to observe some hopeful trends develop, and I rejoice that the Lord is using the Church of Christ today to help bring in his kingdom. There are congregations, Belmont in Nashville, for instance, where I would be proud to be a member because its people have been receptive to the grace of the Lord Jesus. Too, there will always be a warm spot in my heart for the Church of Christ of my youth, for it was there that I received Jesus in baptism, derived my moral values, and learned the written word.

Dorothy: As one who's just thought of leaving, I'm curious as to how the departure affects you socially or personally.

Jennifer: The biggest problem one faces in leaving is that of grief. It seems to me that God placed in all of us a

drive for wholeness. If you lose an arm or leg, you continue to function, but you experience grief for the lost member. The same thing holds psychologically. If you lose a husband, parent, or friend, you grieve because your "community" has been permanently disrupted. It seems that the church of one's youth is an extension of one's community. If you reject the church of your childhood, you deny a part of your religious experience, causing a break in your religious selfhood where there should be an even flow. Your memories, your childhood friendships, and your primary values cannot be eradicated, yet in leaving you are forced to reject the context in which they evolved. Faced with this dilemma, I have inadvertently rejected some part of myself—like an arm or leg.

MLW: Is there a resolution to the dilemma?

Jennifer: Yes, for me there has been—at least partially. I have gone through a process of "reclaiming" areas of my religious past. I've found it helpful in recent years, for example, to isolate those parts of my Church of Christ experience which mean the most: my initial acceptance of Christ, my basic values, my commitment to a "helping" vocation, friends, teachers, fun times, and so on. It's been a comfort to me to meditate on these aspects of my heritage as well as satisfying to acknowledge these contributions to others. In so many ways, I am permanently indebted to this heritage. Yet there is sadness in the act of recollection, in knowing that I cannot repay my debt.

MLW: You'll have to elaborate on that.

Jennifer: What I mean is that, practically speaking, the person who leaves is never the "change" agent. One is much more likely to have a significant impact within a native denomination than as a "novice" in a different one. I envy my friends who have stayed and been able to soften the oppressive rationalism for both themselves and others by experiencing the living Jesus. However much they may be regarded as renegades from within, people in the Church of Christ *listen*, whether to heed or to argue, when they talk about important issues like worship and commitment, changing views of women, Bible interpretation or whatever. And they listen because these "renegades" have been in the church for years. They'd never listen to me because I defected.

MLW: A good point, though some of those heretics you're referring to certainly don't feel that people are listening in a constructive way. But I think that a few are listening, and what they're hearing is making a difference.

Jennifer: I guess I can sum up by saying again that while I don't wish I had stayed in the Church of Christ, I do wish that I could have helped heal some of the aberrations of the body and replace the rationalism with the joy and creative vitality of God's love and with openness which would encourage youngsters to accept themselves and grow in their individual Christian experiences.

(Continued on page 14)

Liberty and Justice for All? Beyond Rhetoric and Guilt

By Eva Archer and Twila Ross

A three-day conference in Newark, New Jersey, recently helped us—two white, middle-class Christians—learn a little of what racism is all about. It was an expanding experience, but not a pleasant one and not very pretty. It moved us, as such conferences have tended to do in recent years, to be deeply sorry for the years we have perpetuated racism. But if the experience is to have any practical effect it must move us beyond rhetoric and guilt—and that was what the conference was all about.

If your face is white, you have never experienced racism. Prejudice, maybe—if you're crippled or a woman or Jewish or ugly—but not the insidious prejudice that is linked to the color of your skin. The racism that exists in America today is a mandated political ideology designed to keep one group of people under the control of another. It is so deep and so pandemic, even after years of civil rights legislation, that it influences our every thought, gesture, and action.

The conference from which this concern arose was co-sponsored by Evangelicals for Social Action and the Committee on Race and Reconciliation. According to conference literature, the co-sponsors are "a loose coalition of Christian people who are seeking to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." Evangelicals for Social Action began in the Fall of 1974 with a Thanksgiving workshop at which they issued a "Declaration of Social Concern" (See *Mission*, November 1974). Recognizing the primacy of the issue of white racism and the tendency to slight it for other issues, a special committee on Race and Reconciliation was formed.

The conference sought to provide a framework for committed white Christians to transform their rhetoric and guilt into specific action against racism. Lerone Bennett, senior editor of *Ebony* magazine, provided a humanistic and historic approach to defining and outlining America's persistent racism. Describing a self-perpetuating American system which, rather than raising our eyes to the stars has lowered them to the gutter, Bennett explained, "We can chart the life course of an average black before he is born—with passage through poverty, inferior education, sub-standard housing, welfare lines and ultimately the county jail."

Eva Archer is an editor with the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, and Twila Ross is associate administrator at the Gainesville, Virginia, Children's Home. Both live in Arlington, Virginia.

Bennett continued, "The system wrote his script and reserved space for him in certain institutions—unless he was very quick or very lucky. But tragically, the system anticipated those blacks who were quick and lucky; and even helpful, white liberals were anticipated—and thus tolerated—by the system.

While the system writes the scripts, there is a small gap as individuals decide how to play their roles—how, as Bennett stated, "they live out their condemnation." That gap is our hope, and if we bridge it, our salvation. Bennett challenged the group to recognize the church's role in ministering to "a generation of black youths roaming the streets without hope, without a compass and without a map" and in confronting a system which "daily, secretly passes down death sentences for racial reasons."

He asserted that the first missionary effort for white Christians is within white churches, and while those efforts require more crucifixions, "we could have a renaissance undreamed of if we could get over this foolishness of racism." With the problem graphically and unavoidably defined, the conference participants moved into fourteen separate action-oriented task forces in such areas as politics, Christian colleges, changing the local church, communications, Christian communities, prisons, and economics.

One of the major themes interwoven throughout the conference was the failure of traditional white theology to deal with oppression in any of its manifestations. Bonnie Green, editor of *Vanguard* magazine, spoke of our "schizophrenic God" who on the one hand stands with and supports the powerful and on the other hand has compassion and mercy for the oppressed. She felt that in most cases we have shaved the beard off Jesus, cut his hair, exchanged his robe for a Brooks Brothers suit, taken the cross off his shoulders and attached a small, neat handle so he could carry it like an attache case. And we have asked him to stand erect, for it is too difficult for the world to respect someone who stoops and is conspicuous. Echoing throughout this entire conference was the reminder that Jesus our Lord was never in step with the system but was at odds with it. While Jesus speaks passionately of abandonment, insecurity, persecution, and exile, the church talks quietly of realism, respectability, and reasonableness. When our relationship to Christ is in the form of commitment, we find a radical change in our relationship to money, social problems, war and violence, power, status, education, and the system as a whole. With this radical

emptying of self, we discover new relationships developing with regard to people, especially the poor, the weak, the defenseless ones in a vicious system.

Although the subject of this conference was "Race and Reconciliation," the major thrust was toward people oppressed for any reason, including racial background. It seemed to be the consensus that the institutional church as a whole has never been a vital agent in combating racism, in bringing about social action for the oppressed or in truly following the lifestyle of the Lord Jesus.

The gospel demands "oneness"; the church offers separation according to economic and racial status. The gospel advocates the sovereignty of God; the church teaches by example the sovereignty of others according to economic and racial prowess. The gospel warns against the foolishness of false trust in idols; the church protects, cherishes, and worships these idols.

The hope for vital involvement of the organized church in the affairs of the oppressed seems futile. Suggestions were offered for sound social action by individually committed people in every aspect of life. Discussed at length was the emergence of Christian communities committed

to the lordship of Jesus and the implications of that lordship in the lives of oppressed people. It was noted that the Christian community is not dependent on shrewd strategies for its existence, but is rather a body of people who seek to honor the claim of Jesus on their lives. They are individuals united by their commitment to live in obedience to the call not to conform to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

There was a plea for a new evangelical spirit that is characterized by a return to deep, biblical faith that addresses itself to the needs of oppressed people. This faith does not tolerate social injustice. It is not afraid to participate in warfare against an "American" way of life that continually oppresses people. This is a radical ethical spirit that demands Christian people who are willing to reevaluate their comfortable lives, their "ease in Zion." It is the spirit of a people ready to see Jesus no longer as chaplain of their church but as a rebel who fought for them at all cost, even the cost of his life.

This is not a cheap call. It demands the greatest price . . . me.

□

On Staying or Leaving

(continued from page 12)

Dorothy: I know what you're saying, Jennifer, and I'd like to think that your staying with us would have made some positive difference to our body as a whole. But I really can't see that we've made much, if any, progress in my forty-odd years, despite the influence of those constructive "renegades" you mention. Oh, I know a few individuals who have changed and who work for improvements, but I can't see that it's made much overall difference. We are still, for the most part, preaching and teaching a doctrine of salvation by works, still discouraging honest intellectual inquiry, still promoting a joyless occasion when we gather on Sunday mornings. I believe that the church as an institution will someday divide again but that there will always be a group with the current lifeless goals of the mainstream Church of Christ.

MLW: Perhaps our perception of these matters is determined to a degree by where we happen to be geographically.

Jennifer: That's right. Some of us live in areas of such diversity that we can choose a church on its individual merits rather than by denominational preference. We can

choose between a spirit-filled Church of Christ or a "dead" Baptist or vice versa, and unite ourselves with the group that seems most receptive to God's leading. But people like Dorothy don't really have the luxury of that option, do they?

Dorothy: No, that privilege is probably reserved for those of you who live in more urban areas, where choices are greater. But maybe a workable solution is to focus on a few who are willing to share rather than on the group as a whole, if it's not a group resistant to change and growth.

Jennifer: I want to add one final observation. I'm pretty sure that if some of my friends and I had had the option of a spirit-filled church like, say, Belmont twenty years ago, we would *not* have left. So why not *stay* in the Church of Christ and look for a Belmont? Or better still, pray and work to make your "Central" a Belmont. God still moves in mysterious ways—even in the Church of Christ!

MLW: Coming from one who had to leave, Jennifer, your words carry far more weight than if they'd been spoken by either Dorothy or me. May God bless you both as you continue to mine and develop the lodes of inner resources he has granted you.

□

A widely respected educator continues a *Mission* conversation on training our church leaders (see "Shaping a Responsible Ministry," June, 1976).

VALUES AND DANGERS IN MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

By John McRay

When in the course of time an institution or ideology ceases to perform the function for which it was created, it becomes irrelevant, obsolete, and finally ignored. Richard Wurmbrand tells of a Greek Orthodox Church in Rumania which is so crammed with golden ikons, candlesticks, and vessels that the only way they have discovered of guarding all this wealth has been not to open the church for services. "In this way the words of St. Augustine have been fulfilled when he says that religion has produced riches and fortunes, but the daughters have consumed their mother" (*Christ on the Jewish Road*, p. 38).

We in the Restoration tradition have cause to ask whether the daughters have not consumed their mother! Has established religion consumed meaningful personal commitment to Jesus Christ? Has our very quest for truth as revealed in the Bible stagnated into a bibliolatry devoid of the power of the living Christ? Particularly, what is the role of a minister in a tradition which, though basing its origin and purpose for existence in an ancient but inspired book, persistently ignores the pressing human concerns of a modern society? Is he to continue to revel in the delights of returning to the "old paths," while facing audiences almost devoid of youth above high school age? (The old paths to which we urge others to return are often not old enough. They should be 2,000 years old—not 200.)

The Church of Christ historically has placed the understanding of Holy Scripture as the chief concern in the qualifications of a minister. We teach that he who stands before an audience to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ has been called of God through the Scripture to

such a position, and that the only qualifications needed are an honest heart, a sincere faith, and an open Bible! And with this view I would not entirely disagree as far as it goes. Its weakness lies in its limited scope. The role of a minister has evolved in our society just as dramatically as have the church services themselves. Midweek "prayer meetings" are no longer prayer meetings; they are gatherings for Bible study and fellowship. Bible study is often not Bible study; it is a pooling of ignorance in Wednesday evening or Sunday morning seminars led by busy people who admittedly have no time for meaningful preparation. Worship services are often not worshipful because they have evolved into the teaching sessions that once were held in classes! And stereotyped formalism has crystallized into a monotonous liturgy which has become confused with the very word of God itself.

The preacher is hired often to "hold a service rather than to herald a Savior." He has become the victim of a system which he himself helped to create. In a large percentage of congregations he is doing the work that God assigned to elders in the New Testament, while the elders are doing the work assigned deacons, who are doing the work of the congregation while the members pay the bills and sit and listen and listen . . . and listen.

I see many *values* in preparing men to assume the role assigned an evangelist or teacher in the New Testament. And I see many *dangers* in preparing ministers to assume the role of pastors to a white, southern, middle-class society, encrusted with traditions which often are not only encumbering the church with a burden it cannot bear, but are at times even contrary to the spirit of Christ himself.

There is no question that ministers need to be trained. No man is more effective than he is qualified to be. The twelve apostles and Paul himself are sufficient evidence of

Dr. John McRay is professor of religious studies at Middle Tennessee State University.

the importance Christ placed on proper training—not to mention Moses, Timothy, and Titus. Whether one is a tree surgeon or a heart surgeon, a pipe-fitter or an astronaut, he normally produces in relation to his preparation. Paul told Timothy to entrust his message to faithful witnesses who would be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). The question is not *whether* men should be trained, but *how* they should be trained . . . trained to do what?

One of the grave dangers I feel in our present system of training is the assumption that the young minister is going

In other words one of the gravest dangers in ministerial education as is currently practiced in the Churches of Christ, in the eyes of these young men, is the system into which they will be forced to function when they finish their training. Our view of the pulpit is partially responsible for this because it resembles far too often the Roman Catholic view of the Vatican. When one occupies the pulpit he speaks with the authority of God; he becomes an official promulgator of truth. It seems to matter little that we are radically divided among ourselves as to what con-

'We want to serve the Lord, but we are afraid of the pulpit because we do not feel the elders will grant us the freedom to preach as Jesus taught.'

out to face the kind of audiences and the kind of problems that were faced by those pioneer preachers who brought the Restoration movement into being. A young man on a foreign field told me, while I was visiting him and evaluating his work, that he was not prepared by his professors to deal with the problems he was now facing—a population whose vast majority did not even accept the New Testament as the word of God. One course in Christian evidences does not meet this need—especially when such a course is often based on problems that the minister will be assumed to face from a society that is largely believing, white, and sympathetic to Christianity to begin with.

Another young man who went through one of our schools and is now working in a ghetto in a large city of our nation informed me that his ministerial training was almost worthless in his present work.

For several Thursday evenings I talked in my home with many of the brightest young men on one of our Christian college campuses—presidents of the student body and various civic organizations, debaters, high officers of international clubs, as well as students who had done mission work abroad—about the values and dangers of ministerial education. Of that group of some fifteen or more, all said they wanted to serve Jesus Christ and give their lives to doing his will—but only one thought he wanted to be a fulltime preacher.

In the past five years a large number of young men have come to my office with essentially the same message: "We want to serve the Lord, but we are afraid of the pulpit because we do not feel the elders will grant us the freedom to practice Christianity and preach it from the pulpit as we feel Jesus taught it." They say the churches, as they see them, are not really facing the burning issues of the day. Elders often discourage their preachers from discussing controversial issues such as race, sex, atheistic communism, abortion, capital punishment, Christian involvement in military service, speaking in tongues, meaningful assistance to the poor, and genuine concern and help for the dope addict, the drunkard, the prostitute, and the long-haired non-conformist.

stitutes the truth on scores of issues.

As long as we demand that a preacher simply reiterate our established positions from the pulpit, just that long will we continue to drive away from the pulpit our brightest and most dedicated young men. They must be allowed to seek truth for themselves with the right to stand in the pulpit as human beings and present what they have found without fear of deprivation to themselves and their families. The progress of truth is not dependent upon dogmatic assertions by infallible pulpiteers. The truth can withstand dissenting opinions. It may, in fact, be more effectively advanced at times in the milieu of honest and sincere disagreement than in the deadening climate of dogmatic assertions.

The pulpit in the church should not be available only to the "clergy"! A most unusual eldership once told me when I began working with them, "You are answerable to God, not us. Preach what your quest for truth produces. If we disagree, we may ask for the pulpit the next service to express our viewpoint and let truth stand." Truth *will* stand—because it is truth. It needs no infallible proclaimers.

Some time ago a number of us who have been teaching for many years met in a hotel suite in New York City with a number of young Church of Christ ministers now studying for higher degrees in well known universities of the Northeast. Only one in the ten or fifteen gathered there wanted to teach in a Christian college—and he had never attended one. The others uniformly said they were afraid of the stultifying effect on their intellect and their quest for truth that the current atmosphere of our colleges would create. I did not share fully in this feeling, nor was I prepared on the other hand to deny it entirely. Right or wrong, this is the way an alarming number of our young ministers are viewing the system, and in it they see a danger for those who would dare to think independently of traditionally accepted positions.

Nor is this feeling limited to the young who would become ministers. I received a letter from one who describes himself as "an old man, comparatively speaking,"

the father of a young person I taught fifteen years ago. Commenting on a recent article of mine he said:

If we mean anything by our non-sectarian profession, as you pointed out, we cannot recognize and submit to the crass and crude sectarianism among ourselves to which we are demanded to pay homage. I have taken a good deal of work in . . . seminary and have taught on a very slight basis there. I have also participated in our local Christian Unity Forum with representatives of Christian Churches. I have tried to show in every possible way my fidelity to the objectives we profess and my respect for those who may not share some of my convictions. But I have been myself increasingly shut out of "brotherhood" fellowship, pulpits, and papers.

The greatest danger I have seen in ministerial education in the Churches of Christ over the past fifteen years, one which threatens to destroy any hope for an educated ministry in the future, is the tremendous power of a system which demands the conformity of its servants—conformity or condemnation. Unless this can be changed, it will be pointless to discuss methodology and curriculum in the training of ministers—because there will be no educated ministers to train.

The opinions of religious leaders about what constitutes

everything that may bear directly on his understanding of those books. There are, of course, various levels of understanding, just as there are various levels of training. The value of fuller training is that one's capacity for understanding is increased. And though training is no guarantee of deeper understanding, there is a limit of understanding beyond which one cannot go without further training.

For example, my files contain letters and notes of telephone calls that have come to me from preachers who want to know what the Greek says about *parthenos* (virgin), *psallo* (make melody), *tekna* (children—of concern in the qualification of elders); or what archaeology has contributed to the problem of the location of Nehemiah's wall in Jerusalem or the location of Noah's ark, etc. Although I am happy to help those who have not had the training to do their own research, it becomes a bit disconcerting when these inquiries come from individuals who deny the need for such preparation by those who would preach!

The value of ministerial education, if properly done, is that it prepares a man to deal confidently and somewhat authoritatively with the difficult problems he faces without always relying on someone else's conclusions. This is not to suggest that we do not need the work of others. We

The greatest danger in ministerial education is the tremendous power of a system which demands the conformity of its servants.

acceptable training for ministers has differed greatly. The direct operation of the Holy Spirit has been regarded as both necessary and sufficient preparation by a segment of Christendom and is becoming widely accepted again in our own generation. To others, one need only have a desire to preach and a Bible in his hand in order to be amply qualified for the pulpit. Some of the larger Protestant bodies have required a college degree in religious studies in addition to the bachelor's degree in arts or sciences. It has been felt that this broad base in secular and religious studies was necessary to enable the minister to function religiously in a secular society.

Most of the larger seminaries in our country, however, are dropping the requirement of biblical languages from the B.D. degree, along with studies in geography of the Bible and textual studies in the Scripture itself. The reason is obviously that the Bible no longer serves as the standard of authority for the congregations where these ministers will serve. The minister is being trained as a professional pastor and counsellor whose duties include almost no exposition of the word of God as a written document.

I am concerned that the Churches of Christ today are also moving in that direction. It is difficult to understand how a man can be qualified to deal with sixty-six different books, written over a period of 1,500 years in three ancient languages, without devoting himself to the study of

do. But for the evangelist and teacher who would profess to be a specialist in dealing with Holy Scripture and in applying its solutions to the complex problems of human nature, the ability to bring history, geography, archaeology, and the original languages to bear on his study is imperative. Without it he must of necessity rely on the work of others who do have such training.

These remarks must not be construed to mean that a Christian cannot tell others what he has done to become a child of God without ministerial training. It does not mean that a dedicated child of God cannot and must not testify to the saving grace of God in his life. Peter and John were described in Acts 4:13 as *agrammatos kai idiotes*, i.e., "uneducated and untrained." In essence that means they had not been to seminary! But they were effective in their ministry because, as Luke puts it, "they had been with Jesus." We, too, may simply testify to the power of Jesus in our lives. However, since we do not receive our understanding of Jesus by inspiration or personal conversation with him, we who teach and preach—we who not only live our religion but also attempt to understand and teach the Bible—must prepare ourselves to the best of our abilities to transmit this teaching to an increasingly complex society. Before it can be taught, it must be understood. Herein lies the value of proper training.

(Continued on page 20)

LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES: A WHOLE-LIFE APPROACH

From the Editor

If medical tests show your relative's life is being sustained artificially and there is no brain-wave activity, can you make a decision to remove the supports?

If you can live only with a kidney machine and your hospital does not have enough machines for you and its other patients, how would you want the life-or-death decision to be made?

If you have an aging relative or friend who needs fulltime care and has no money, where can you find help?

A "Value of Life" program, featuring such nationally known speakers as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, will explore these and similar dilemmas in Dallas December 1-4 at the Hilton Hotel. Although some 1,000 Texas delegates will have priority, out-of-staters may also attend if space permits.*

Obviously, the life and death issues to which such conferences alert us are of universal concern. Dr. Rex Mix, director of the project, hopes that a special feature of the conference will contribute to similar discussions throughout the nation. That feature is a face-to-face discussion among authorities from the church, the hospital, and the courtroom—the institutions which too often find themselves adversaries in life-or-death decisions. Although the project was initiated by the Texas Conference of Churches, it is also endorsed by the Texas Medical Association and will include such legal figures as W. Page Keaton, professor of law and former dean of the University of Texas Law School, one of three keynote speakers.

Other keynoters are James Gustafson, professor of ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School; and Edmund D. Pellegrino, professor of medicine and chairman of the board at the Yale-New Haven Medical Center.

"We want to encourage examination of new attitudes in medicine, law, and ethics toward problems raised by rapid progress in life science technology," Mix says. Some of

these issues, such as abortion and health care to the poor, have been highlighted recently because they are politically sensitive areas. Others, such as the right to die in dignity, receive special attention because of the emotional nature of the Karen Ann Quinlan cases among us. And still others, such as rumors that scientists could "create" humanoids by genetic manipulation, are the kind of ethical-medical-legal issues which form a kind of science-fiction backdrop to the life-drama of our times.

All too often, conference sponsors believe, decisions on such issues are made without the sort of whole-life approach they envision for the conference. A "right-to-die" enthusiast frequently refuses to recognize that "pulling the plug" on life-support machines could well establish legal precedent directly opposed to the dignity of life. A doctor often insists on unilateral decision-making authority which ignores the wishes of the family. And the legal profession's problematic involvement in these issues is typified by the fact that the Texas Bar Association has, at this writing, refused to co-sponsor the project because of its own brand of immobilizing fear that it might blur the distinction between church and state.

Hopefully, the conference will clarify the role of these players in what boils down to the life-or-death drama reenacted daily in our medical centers, laboratories, and other health care institutions. It is Mix's hope that continuing committees in local communities will be able to use the materials and information offered at the conference to help such persons fight through their personal agony to a decision with which they can live—or die—with some sense of dignity.

Mission readers may be interested in a collection of articles being made available to conference participants or others who are interested in the ethics of such issues. It consists of a \$6.40 packet which can be ordered from The Hastings Center, 360 Broadway, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York 10706.

*Call the Texas Conference of Churches in Austin, (512)478-7491.

BOOKS

By *Bobbie Lee Holley*

*Readers are invited to submit reviews to Mrs. Holley,
at 1508 Ephesus Church Rd., Chapel Hill,
North Carolina 27514.*

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE: THE HEALING AND CHARISMATIC REVIVALS IN MODERN AMERICA by David Edwin Harrell, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 304 pp. \$10.95.

TIME was when respectable Christians avoided faith healers and tongue speakers like the plague and dismissed the whole lot as a bunch of "kooks." Harrell's book traces a movement from its modest origin among Pentecostal churches as it matures into the multi-faceted charismatic movement with major inroads into practically every Christian denomination. By the mid-70s, with perhaps five million participants, it is the greatest mass religious movement of this century and has become practically fashionable.

An entertaining story it is. We meet colorful characters such as the Reverend Ike and his motto: "The lack of money is the root of all evil"; A.A. Allen, who had to encourage his followers to stop shipping their deceased loved ones to Miracle Valley, Arizona, for "God does not choose to raise everyone"; Marjoe Gortner whose exposé called for close examination to sort out the genuine from the con men and racketeers. There were Aimee Semple McPherson, who seemed to thrive on controversy and scandal and LeRoy Jenkins whose Church of What's Happening Now was controlled by a "four man board: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and me." Jack Coe, who charged from a Miami jail that his trial was a conspiracy of atheists, newsmen and Churches of Christ. Kathryn Kuhlman is the acknowledged queen of the movement, but

there are also such symbols of moderation in the revival as Oral Roberts, Jimmy Swaggert, and Pat Boone.

We enter in Harrell's book a world loaded with emotion, controversy, and conflicting reports. Both the advocate and the opponent find abundant resources. On the negative side, practitioners experienced many healing failures; they were sued by the IRS; they were arrested for drunken driving. Revival tents were demolished in storms. Educational credentials were sometimes less than impressive (one revivalist exhibited a doctorate from Carter's Bible College, North Carolina). They were jailed for "practicing medicine without a license," and were scandalized in a thousand ways. ("Many false prophets have gone out into the world!")

The advocate, on the other hand may point to healings as broad as medical science, from headaches to cancer to death. Their heroes conducted revivals under the personal auspices of heads of state and performed under tents larger than the Ringling Brothers Big Top. They authored best-selling volumes on every subject from Bible translation to demons to raising the dead, and published periodicals with subscriptions exceeding two million. They preached to single audiences of 400,000. They built \$55-million universities and 8,000-seat Cathedrals of Tomorrow, managed annual operating budgets of \$15 million and sponsored orphan homes

and benevolent programs too numerous to mention. They personally conquered terminal illnesses, alcoholism and prisons to lead abundant lives resulting in a mission especially to the poor. "Our desire," said one leader, "is to reach those that churches don't want." ("The foolishness of God is wiser than men!")

Drawing together such diversity of leaders into a single movement obviously creates problems for any writer, as does attempting to identify origins and to measure successes and failures in these matters. Our author believes that the movement had its origin among post World War II Pentecostal (mostly Assembly of God and Pentecostal Holiness) churches, prospered as the healing revival of the 1950s, declined because of loss of funding in the mid-60s, and has recovered with fresh vigor and renewed emphasis on healing by the mid '70s.

Harrell ventures yet one step further (or backward) in attempting to dismiss himself from the doctrinal question while acknowledging that he does not share the "theological presuppositions" of the charismatics. However, he does not identify what these presuppositions are; to do so may be just the problem. By thus raising the issue, Harrell ventures as far as the ropes of the arena; and, recognizing that the historian of religion treads upon precarious grounds and that deeper problems are emerging here, turns back and prefers not to wrestle in the cosmic battle where man engages evil and suffering in a primal struggle. This is the contest that takes place in a mass healing rally.

Harrell is professor of history at the University of Alabama and has already given us an important book for understanding Restoration schisms, entitled *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ*. The present volume is an admirable bit of probing into a complex and controversial subject (although the structure of the book into chapters, sub-chapters and sub-sub chapters is a bit difficult). He attempts to ferret out

and assemble a movement whose heroes have traditionally remained as enigmatic to their contemporaries and as elusive to subsequent historians as were the prophets of old. The primary source is periodic literature, the only significant assemblage of which is the Pentecostal Collection at Oral Roberts University. Harrell also conducted taped interviews with twenty-six participants and leaders in the revivals; the tapes have also been deposited at ORU. An extensive bibliographic essay and 16 pages of photographs will prove helpful to readers who wish to probe further.

After one has read the standard church histories, he still needs

volumes like Harrell's to fill in an important part of the story. But what must yet follow will fill in even greater gaps, for *All Things Are Possible* focuses upon the more bizarre and peripheral extremes of a movement. What about the now-aroused mass of members of lethargic denominations who had so long been starved for a more dynamic experience? It is this story of mainstream renewal that is yet to be written. He who tells this story will need, in addition to Harrell's volume (destined to become a standard), two important books from 1974 apparently overlooked in the present work: *Filled With New Wine* by James W. Jones and *The Fire Flares Anew* by John Stevens Kerr. More extensive use could be made of the publications

from Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International, especially a series entitled *The Acts of the Holy Spirit in . . .* (names of various denominations follow, including one on the Church of Christ). Another important volume, more recent than Harrell's, is *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. by Vinson Synan (Logos International, 1975).

America's religious history is written in valleys of irreligion and peaks of Great Awakenings. What Harrell and others are calling our attention to (contrary to those who decry the state of religion in America's bicentennial year) will join the historical record among the latter.

WAYNE WALDEN
Duxbury, Mass.

Ministerial Education

(Continued from page 17)

The decrease in numbers of young men who are receiving ministerial education in our schools has led to the rise of what are being termed preacher training schools. Admittedly, my acquaintance with these schools has been only through their own printed material and through conversations with others who are themselves involved in the programs. We must all rejoice that there are such efforts being made to provide further and deeper study. In times such as ours, with materialism making such tremendous inroads into the thinking of Christian people, any effort to increase spirituality through an earnest exploration of God's inspired word must be encouraged. The only hope for the continuing influence of Christ in the world is for Christians to stay close to the teaching of the Bible; and in a time when our normal teaching programs in our churches as a whole are not as effective as they should be, we can only welcome these further opportunities for meaningful Bible study.

But at this point I would issue a word of caution. Such schools are not and should never be limited to preachers or elders alone. In reality they are, as I see them, not preacher training schools at all but *Christian* training schools. Their purpose should be to provide the opportunity for any servant of God to deepen his understanding of the Bible and related matters. The experience should be a broadening one, a deepening one, adding to the foundation that is already there. Any Christian should leave such a training school with greater ability to communicate his faith to others.

But, to leave the impression that such a school gives the

person who attends it an education comparable to that which is to be received in accredited academic institutions of this country is utter nonsense. To even intimate that such a program of study is comparable to a doctoral program in accredited institutions is to be grossly ignorant of what is involved in such programs or to be wilfully deceptive. These schools can continue to serve as an important adjunct to the teaching program of the churches where they are located and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of the kingdom of God in those vicinities. But they must never be assumed to be more than an adjunct. They do not and cannot provide a minister with the education he needs to be most effective in this highly educated society in which he will serve.

The need for educated preachers and teachers who are well-grounded in the word of God and dedicated to the cause of continuing the restoration of New Testament Christianity has never been greater. Centuries of Catholicism followed by centuries of Protestant reaction have dulled our sensitivity to the spirit of Christianity as it was conceived by Jesus of Nazareth. Education and training are needed today as much to clear away misconceptions and hurtful traditions as to understand the simple truth after it has been thus excavated. The problem before us is not so much one of building the building as of attempting to build it without first clearing the rubble of previous buildings from the ground where the structure must stand. Never has the need been greater to separate truth from tradition, opinion from fact, and "Thus saith the Lord" from "thus saith the editors."

□

FORUM

Bobbie Lee Has Done It

Sometime ago I expressed the desire to see something in *Mission* that was less doctrinal and more inspirational—my plea was “Tell me what you believe in. I’ve got doubts enough of my own.”

Bobbie Lee Holley has done it! Her new “Books” column was, for me, a cross between Leslie Conger’s column in *The Writer* and Gladys Taber’s *Stillmeadow* books.

I’ve admired Bobbie from afar and have read and recommended everything she’s written (which has been all too little). I can already see that it’ll be the page I turn to first.

And yes, oh yes! “Cross Currents” in the September issue is reminiscent of the best of “Balaam’s Friend.” I’d like to see more like this.

JACKIE HUMPHRIES
Friendswood, Texas

Porno and a Free Press

I applaud Neil Gallagher’s crusade against obscene literature and his willingness to commit himself to its removal from public places. I must take issue, however, with one of his underlying premises about the principle of a free press; namely, that a free press, like other social institutions, is and should be subject to popular majorities. The relevant paragraph reads:

In a democratic society, any legal blessing, expressed through legislators or city councilmen, represents the will of the people. If laws did not represent the will of the people, they wouldn’t be laws. That is the premise upon which the legal framework of democratic society exists. It is not the will of one (autocracy) nor the will of a few (obligarchy), but it is the will

of many which is reflected in democratic society. Since Harris and Gallup document that 80 percent of America opposes pornography, it is reasonable and just to expect strong obscenity laws.

Now, if I understand Mr. Gallagher’s reasoning, it is that any published work that does not meet with the approval of a popular majority could be excised, a very dangerous doctrine indeed. The Founders, recognizing this, removed free speech/free press from the realm of majoritarianism by purposefully including these matters within the protection of the Bill of Rights which begins with the significant words “Congress shall make no law . . .”

The question then becomes, What were the intentions of the Framers in sealing off free speech/free press from ordinary lawmaking majorities? Clearly, not all publication is equally meritorious (e.g. libel, military secrets). Equally clearly, free press is an area that must not be subject to the whims of popular majorities. In 1957 the U.S. Supreme Court dealt with this dilemma by stating that obscenity is not within the meaning of the special protection offered by the Bill of Rights because it lacks “redeeming social value.”

There the matter rests, and the problem remains that—despite Mr. Gallagher’s arguments to the contrary—one man’s art is another man’s obscenity. Could there be honest differences on, for example, *Lady Chatterly’s Lover* or *Portnoy’s Complaint*?

I would also take issue with one other minor point made by Mr. Gallagher. Despite his unqualified

assertion regarding the connection of obscene literature and anti-social behavior, the evidence is simply not persuasive either way on the subject. Indeed, the manner in which research regarding the question is necessarily designed defies sound empirical research, i.e., how can one determine if reading obscene literature is an outlet which *deters* sex crime? Do we ask those who do *not* commit such crimes?

I close on a note of agreement with Mr. Gallagher. The Supreme Court’s recent interest in *community* standards is a welcome trend in that it does not impose esthetic tastes (or lack thereof) in sex literature held by cosmopolitan communities upon less cosmopolitan communities such as Nashville, Tennessee, or Abilene, Texas.

GARY E. THOMPSON
Abilene, Texas

Identifying the Issues

Cline Davis’ letter (September 1976) inadvertently points out the problem facing the church on the evolution issue today. He correctly points out the need to separate the theories of science from the Bible, and then confuses theory with fact. My article (June issue) on the capability of “evolution” and the Bible did not espouse the theory of amoeba to man, but rather the fact that animals can change (clearly pointed out in the Scriptures and totally compatible with its message and purposes). Until we learn to identify what the issues are and aren’t, we will continue to lose the war with Satan for the minds of the young.

JOHN N. CLAYTON
South Bend, Indiana

Sacramental Sundays?

Everett Ferguson’s legal brief seeking to establish Sunday as a holy day and the only time for sharing the Lord’s Supper “proves” too much. His case appears to rest almost wholly on post-apostolic sources and second-century beliefs, unless he can make certain—which he did not—that John’s reference to “the Lord’s Day”

in Revelation specifically refers to Sunday.

If one wishes to be sticky about the calendar, then Paul met with the Troas Christians "for the breaking of bread" (a common meal and probably the Lord's Supper) on Saturday night and Paul spent most of Sunday travelling toward Jerusalem. And why Saturday night? An appropriate time for the Jewish Christians who observed the Sabbath, an appropriate time for laborers after the week's work, an appropriate time for slaves who had to work during the daytime.

This is the sole reference in the New Testament relating Christian group activity to time or the calendar. In spite of Dr. Ferguson's effort to relate Sunday and the Lord's Supper to the "three thousand souls who were brought in" at Pentecost, there is no time table by which the converts were to devote themselves to "instruction given by the apostles and to fellowship, breaking bread and praying together." Jesus specified no time for the Lord's Supper, only that "as often" as his followers were to break bread together, they were to do it in his memory. It was instituted on a Thursday (or a Wednesday) night.

I feel that Dr. Ferguson strains the words of Paul in Romans 4:1 to make a legal point. Paul was clearly not talking about the *first day* of the week, but the *fact* that Jesus was "installed as the Son of God with power when he was raised from the dead." Paul also appears quite neutral with respect to *day* observance, putting on an equal footing both the Christian who thought one day more important than others and the Christian who rated all days alike (Rom. 14:5).

I was surprised to find Dr. Ferguson underwriting Church of Christ orthodoxy on contributing "to put something aside" each first day of

the week against a collection to be made later for the Jerusalem poor. I had thought all scholarship agreed that Paul was saying here to put something aside *at home*—a logical place and time when the believer knew how much he had earned during the past week. Such a church treasury rule as Dr. Ferguson was advocating was actually meaningless to my childhood home congregation of cotton farmers who never had any income except at cotton picking time. Though they followed the "pattern," the record books of this sizable body showed collections of twenty to sixty cents!

The doctrine of the Lord's Supper only on Sunday has turned it into a sacrament and has produced practices in the church wholly foreign to the New Testament. One is that if it is missed on Sunday morning (an awkward time for supper), it must be taken at night to avoid sinning. In hundreds of churches it is served a second time to a handful of standing believers while all others sit silent and non-participant. This practice nullifies the basic concept of the oneness of the body and its unity which Christ's followers are to discern in the Supper. Even worse is the taking of the "communion" to a shut-in and that person becomes the only participant! Such is the absurdity to which the observance of a "sacrament" has led us.

I am aware that second and third generation Christians developed the "Lord's Day" concept of Sunday. The emperor had his "day." The pagan sects had their days. The Jews had their holy day. So why not Christians? In the same way they came to feel the need of "mystery" to compete with the mystery sects, and thus changed the Lord's Supper into the mass. The changes in our calendar are enough to confuse the business of *day* observance.

I am inclined to think that every day is the Lord's day for a Christian. And while I see no reason for changing the observance of the Lord's Supper weekly, I do believe there are other appropriate times—when one feels strongly the need to share with others in the memory of Jesus. What better way to launch a loved one on a distant journey than by gathering his intimate friends about him and proclaiming our unbreakable unity with him in the breaking of bread! What better way to launch a prospective bride and groom on their life journey than a wedding party breaking bread on a Thursday night!

NORMAN L. PARKS
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Reporting? Yes!

I am glad to see *Mission* reporting the news. We need to see more in print about the forces at work throughout our brotherhood. Both types of journalism are needed and are important to the people. Most of our scholarship in "the church" has been outstanding. Most of our reporting has been biased. What has been reported in *Mission* is very fair and truthful, but it simply has not been enough to suit my appetite. Thank you for bringing us up-to-date on news events (such as Pepperdine) which we are not able to ascertain by ourselves.

I find Pepperdine's statements, as well as the University of Dallas, which I attend, to be highly presumptive. Both foster an attitude of success, the "goddess" of America. To prate on that responsibility seems to me to be a bit irresponsible. If you can't win them, join them.

JERRY BRYAN
Duncanville, Texas

Some doctors are relaxing their previous opposition to sex change operations. Dr. Renee Richards is a frequently publicized example of an increasing number of persons who have switched sexes after experiencing deep dissatisfaction with their original sexuality.

Is this an issue to which a Christian ethic should speak? Is it related at all to Paul's reference to sinful sexual practices

in 1 Corinthians 6:9? Are sex change operations morally different from other organ transplants? What do you think?

Share your opinion with other Mission readers by completing the box below and mailing it to the address indicated.

The Editor
Mission Journal
Box 15024
Austin, TX 78761

I believe sex change operations are (check one): ☐ all right ☐ wrong

Comments: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

☐ Check here if you wish your name withheld from publication

←CROSS CURRENTS→

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: DON'T FORGET NIEBUHR

Government, said the Carter ads, must be as great as the American people. Now that the born-again governor is packing for Washington, let us hope he will repack that particular piece of baggage.

For the American people are not only capable of greatness, but of sin. Carter's approach was a predictable—and perhaps necessary—reaction to Watergate ethics. But Watergate, sadly, was not a total exception to the real America. It was in some ways an exemplification of the side of ourselves that runs to pride and greed and the drive to power.

We hope that the President-elect packs such books as those by Reinhold Niebuhr, who Carter says has shaped his point of view. If so, Carter must recognize that our shortcomings do not originate in such specific instances as the world's Watergates. They are, rather, rooted in an ever-present Pit into which our darker capacities plunge us, overcoming our capacity for greatness.

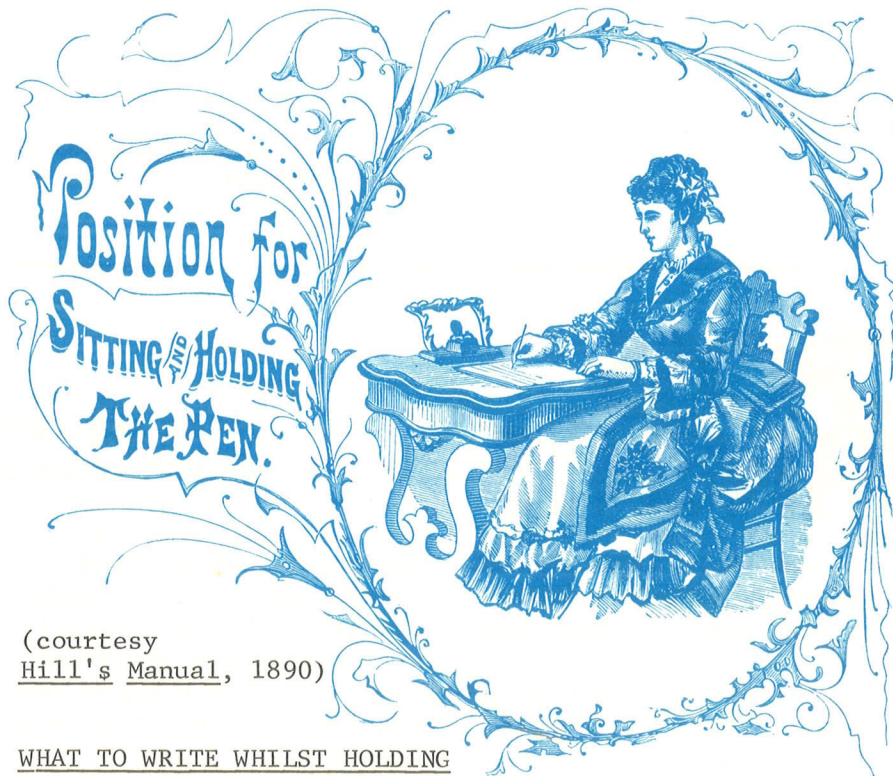
Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect this darker capacity to be dwelt on during a political campaign. And, although he said it badly in the now infamous *Playboy* interview, the Georgian did show an awareness of this tragic reality in human nature. Now, it is to be hoped, Carter's religious idealism will be accompanied by a realism about the nation he will lead.

It is, to be sure, a great nation; but this greatness is not primarily in its goodness. Our strength, paradoxically, is in our freedom to confess that quite the opposite traits also simmer beneath the land's crust, ready to erupt precisely at those moments when we are most confident of our inherent greatness. If the Democrats' anticipated thrust toward more social programs results in the kind of social control which inhibits this freedom to be governmentally self-critical, Carter will not have tapped our greatness but our shame.

—RD

MISSION
P.O. BOX 15024
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78761

SECOND CLASS
POSTAGE PAID AT
AUSTIN, TEXAS



(courtesy
Hill's Manual, 1890)

WHAT TO WRITE WHILST HOLDING
THE PEN ARIGHT

(courtesy Mission Journal, 1976)

--A gift subscription, naturally. Just send \$6 for a
year-long Christmas present for a friend.

--After all, what's the use of writing reading right
if we don't read the right writing?

--Why not do it right...now?